



# Blomidon Naturalists Society

Winter 2002 – Volume 29 Number 4

## **Blomidon Naturalists Society**

*The primary objective of the Society shall be to encourage and develop in its members an understanding and appreciation of nature. For the purpose of the Society, the word "nature" will be interpreted broadly and shall include the rocks, plants, animals, water, air, and stars.*

(from the BNS constitution)

### **BNS Executive**

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Past president	Merritt Gibson	582-7569
Vice president	Mike McCall	678-6273
Treasurer	Harold Forsyth	542-5983
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	Stephen Petersen	542-4861
	Jim Laceby	542-2291

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a member of the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation, and the Brier Island Ocean Study (BIOS). The society is an affiliated member of the Canadian Nature Federation.

The Blomidon Naturalists Society is a registered charity. Receipts (for income tax purposes) will be issued for all donations.

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[<www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm>](http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/~bns/home.htm)

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Illustrations by Mary Pratt (cover, pp. 7, 13, 18)

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Contributions to the BNS newsletter are always welcome. Members are encouraged to share unusual or pleasurable nature stories through the pages of the BNS newsletter. If you have a particular area of interest, relevant articles and stories are always welcome. Send them to Mike McCall by mail, RR 3, Centreville, NS B0P 1J0; by e-mail, <mikemccall@ns.sympatico.ca>; or by fax, 902 678-1812.

## **Upcoming newsletter deadlines**

Spring, March 27, 2003

Summer, June 26, 2003

## **Editorial Board**

Chair: Mike McCall (902 678-6273)

Committee: Merritt Gibson, Sherman Williams, George Alliston

Production: Doug Linzey

Distribution: Bill and Brenda Thexton, Judy Tufts, Lorna Hart

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## **Editor's Notes**

This morning, January 12, as I plied my shovel through drifted snow to open up a path to the car, I marvelled that 492 years ago Champlain and his pals, snowbound for months at Port Royal, thought that this country was worth returning to. This thought was interrupted by high-pitched calls of “chickadee-dee-dee” as small quick shapes darted in and out of protective spruce to lift sunflower seeds from the feeder, and goldfinches clung happily to the wind-tossed niger feeder. “Of course,” I said to myself, “they came back because big, strong adventurers that they were weren’t going to be intimidated by weather that was happily endured by small birds weighing in at ten grams.

Yes, winter can be a pain in the neck, but the rewards of living in a climate whose changing seasons bring us skin-freezing cold at one end, skin-burning heat at the other, seem infinitely more interesting than mono-climate equatorial ones. So, while we may not truly “love” each day of winter, and by March it seems to have gone on much too long, the payoff in the variety of bird life, the sure return of the growing season, and the blaze of fall colour in our woods seem more than sufficient reason to remain. It brought Champlain back, didn’t it?

This marks my last issue as editor of this newsletter. This quarterly journal depends on the contributions of many people, not all of whom can be named here, and my thanks go out to all of you who have supported the newsletter. In particular I thank our regulars – Merritt Gibson, Roy Bishop, and Larry Bogan – who always have something interesting (and usually entertaining) to say. Jean Timpa and Angus MacLean and the Giffins made sure we had lots of birding news. Phil Taylor and Doug Linzey most ably did the tricky bit – converting a collection of contributions into a printable document. And Mary Pratt has always cheerfully, and often on short notice, given us charming illustrations.

To those of you who have contributed but who aren’t named here, the reason is only because the list is very long and there is only so much space. You know who you are.

Mike McCall

—ANNOUNCEMENT—

**Spring North American Migration Count  
10 May 2003**

To all birders, feeder-watchers, and anyone interesting in counting birds:

Yes, it's that time again! The twelfth annual North American Migration Count (NAMC 2003) year of operation gets under way with the spring count on **Saturday, May 10, 2003** – the second Saturday in May.

We ask those of you wishing to participate in this worthwhile migratory bird project to circle it on your calendar now. Keep that date *open*. Have some fun counting birds.

Start planning for NAMC 2003 now. Contact your local county coordinator, area representative, or me, the provincial coordinator (see below), for more information if needed.

All are welcome, no fee involved.

Judy Tufts (1 902 542-7800)  
Wolfville, NS  
Nova Scotia Coordinator for NAMC  
E-mail: <tandove@ns.sympatico.ca>

# **Blomidon Naturalists Society**

## **Winter 2002/2003**

### **Meetings**

Unless otherwise noted, all meeting are held at 7:30 p.m. in the Beveridge Arts Centre, Room 244, Acadia University. The arts centre is across Main Street from the Atlantic Theatre Festival parking lot, just west of downtown Wolfville.

**Monday, January 20, 2003** – Ron Buckley will heat things up with the latest news on **global warming**.

**Monday, February 17, 2003** – Annual **Show & Tell** night. Bring along anything you'd like to share with fellow naturalists: slides (no more than 20, please), photos, videos, computer stuff, collections, favourite books, bird nests, plants, insects . . . the list goes on. Or just bring a friend and gawk at the wonders. *Note: this meeting will be in Patterson Hall, Rooms 308 and 325.*

**Monday, March 17, 2003** – TBA

**Monday, April 21, 2003** – TBA

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#### **BNS Calendar error**

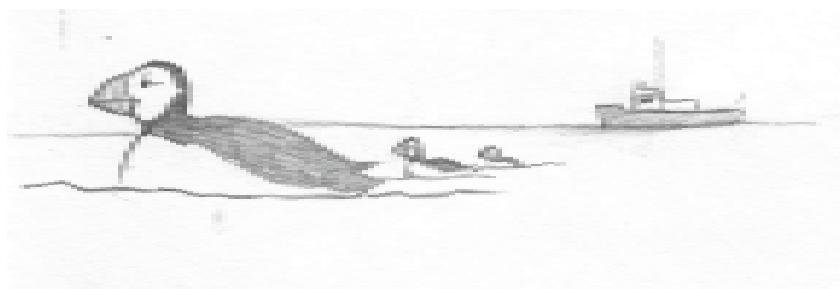
*The photographer's credit for the eagle photo on the cover of the 2003 BNS calendar properly belongs to Robert Davies, not Andrew Davies*

## **Field Trips**

Unless otherwise indicated, all field trips begin at the Robie Tufts Nature Centre (RTNC) on Wolfville's Front Street (look for the weird chimney in the NS Liquor Commission parking lot). Additional field trips may be announced at BNS meetings.

**January 25 & 26 and February 1 & 2, 2003** – Two **EagleWatch** weekends. The Sheffield Mills Community Hall will again be the indoor retreat for pancake and sausage breakfasts, eagle-watching maps, naturalist displays, films, crafts, and community suppers. Best time for eagle activity and feeding is mid-morning (before or after breakfast). For more information, contact Richard Hennigar (582-3044)

**Sunday, April 27, 2003 – Early Spring Birds of Kings County** with the NS Bird Society and BNS. Leader Jim Wolford (542-9204). 10 a.m. at the RTNC. Bring lunch, warm clothes and dipositions, binoculars, scopes, field guides, and field footwear.



# **Wolfville Christmas Bird Count – 2002**

## **compiled by Ian Paterson**

The Wolfville Christmas bird count was held on December 14. The weather was fine for the morning, but the afternoon rain kept both birders and birds under shelter. Despite only half a day of counting, there was a good turnout from participants and a reasonable number of species were recorded. Sixty-five species were counted, with seven additional species seen during the count week (indicated by “cw” in the table).

To see count records from the past seven years, plus a map outlining the count area, go to the BNS website <[www.go.ednet.ns.ca/bns/](http://www.go.ednet.ns.ca/bns/)> and follow the Christmas Bird Counts link. Thanks to Larry Bogan for posting this information, and to Jim Wolford for helping compile this year’s count.

### **Bush Beaters**

George Alliston, Margaret Alliston, Peter Austin-Smith, Charlane Bishop, Fen Bishop-Boates, Sherman Boates, Larry Bogan, Silas Bondrup-Nielsen, Soren Bondrup-Nielsen, Mike Boudreau, Dennis Brannen, Sam Crawford, Katie Daley, Gail Davis, Mark Elderkin, Fred Forsyth, George Forsythe, Harold Forsyth, Bernard Forsythe, Glenys Gibson, Jamie Gibson, Merritt Gibson, Dale Gruchy, Claire Kellock, Patrick Kelly, Doug Linzey, Doug Mackie, Angus MacLean, Randy Milton, Terri Milton, Dawn Miner, Adele Mullie, Mike O’Brien, Ian Paterson, Mike Peckford, Derek Potter, Barry Sabean, Dave Shutler, P.C. Smith, Sarah Spencer, Richard Stern, Phil Taylor, Bill Thexton, Brenda Thexton, Jean Timpa, Chris Toplack, Gerry Trueman, Rick Whitman, Sherman Williams, Jim Wolford

### **Feeder Watchers**

Agar Adamson, Jim Amos, Peter Austin-Smith, Diana Bishop, Carol Buckley, Dick Cain, Sandy Connelly, Chris Cox, Sue Cox, Debbie & Jim Daigle, Pat Davis, Ev Eagles, Paul Elderkin, Wendy Elliott, Mary Ellis, Val Flecknell, Hilma Frank, Mary Sue Goulding, Dale Gruchy, Charlotte Harper, Eileen Harris, Lorna Hart, Avril Harwood, Gail Herbin, Maxine Hill, Marg & Bob Horne, Isobel Horton, Winnie Horton, Lana Isenor, Shirley Jackson, Jean Leung, Del & Mac MacInnes, Ron

Margeson, Shirley & Don Marston, Pat Martell, Jessie Martin, Sheila McCurdy, Rosaleen McDonald, Jennifer Miner, Terry Murphy, Edna Mutch, Gary Ness, Linda & Andy Nette, Nancy Nickerson, Linda & Terry Pearson, Dorothy Perkin, Mary Pratt (2 feeders), Shirley Prescott, Ladny Richmond, Gordon Robart, Marg Russell, Linda Sacouman, Don Sam, Ruth Scott, Ed Shynal, Peter Smith, Sandy Stevens, Merriam Sullivan, Dianne Thorpe, Chris Toplack, Dave Tracy, Gerry Trueman, Eva Urban, Tami & Terry & Neil & Mitch & Sam Whiston, Jackie White, Jim Wolford, Don Wright, Sheila & Earl Young

### **Special Note**

It's good to see some of the younger generation participating. This year they included Fen Bishop-Boates, Silas Bondrup-Nielsen, Sam Crawford, and Claire Kelloc.

### **The Birds**

<i>Species</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Number</i>
Great Blue Heron	cw	Ring-necked Pheasant	183
Canada Goose	1,238	Ruffed Grouse	1
American Black Duck	2,044	Ring-billed Gull	39
Mallard	738	Herring Gull	6,972
Green-winged Teal	2	Iceland Gull	4
Greater Scaup	cw	Glaucous Gull	cw
Surf Scoter	3	(unidentified imm gulls)	1,450
White-winged Scoter	29	Lesser Black-backed Gull*	cw
Black Scoter	3	Great Black-backed Gull	2,196
Bufflehead	1	Rock Dove	447
Common Goldeneye	23	Mourning Dove	1,528
Common Merganser	39	Barred Owl	4
Bald Eagle (adult)	160	Short-eared Owl	cw
(immature)	149	Downy Woodpecker	99
(unknown age)	40	Hairy Woodpecker	43
Northern Harrier	3	Northern Flicker	51
Sharp-shinned Hawk	11	Pileated Woodpecker	6
Northern Goshawk	1	Northern Shrike	2
Red-tailed Hawk	100	Gray Jay	2
Rough-legged Hawk	12	Blue Jay	688
Merlin	2	American Crow	3,819
Peregrine Falcon	3	Common Raven	312

<i>Species</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Number</i>
Horned Lark	20	Song Sparrow	170
Black-capped Chickadee	894	Swamp Sparrow	2
Boreal Chickadee	cw	White-throated Sparrow	89
Red-breasted Nuthatch	26	White-crowned Sparrow	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	34	Dark-eyed Junco	1,402
Brown Creeper	18	Snow Bunting	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	96	Red-winged Blackbird	3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	Common Grackle	5
American Robin	79	Brown-headed Cowbird	cw
Northern Mockingbird	12	Baltimore Oriole	1
European Starling	9,969	Purple Finch	20
Cedar Waxwing (unidentified waxwing)	131	Pine Siskin	10
Yellow-rumped Warbler	4	American Goldfinch	1,155
Yellow-breasted Chat	cw	Evening Grosbeak	54
American Tree Sparrow	1	House Sparrow	689
Chipping Sparrow	277	Eastern Phoebe	1
Savannah Sparrow	5	Vesper sparrow	1
	11		

### Summary

Total number of birds	37,629
Total number of species	67
+ observed in count week (cw)	8
Total party time (hr.)	114.7
by foot (hr.)	62.5
by car (hr.)	52.2
Total party distance (km)	681.3
by foot (km)	89.7
by car (km)	591.6
Number of feeders/yards watched	65
Number of feeder/yard watchers	79
Total time watching feeders/yards (hr.)	98.8

## Fall 2002 Birds

### Barbara and Pat Giffin

Thank you for the feedback on “Summer Birds” and for all your reports. It would be helpful if your reports included the full AOU names for species, including capitalization. For gender, age, and count, please adhere to the format “2f, 4m imm Wood Duck” (options for age include imm, juv, ad). When gender and age are not included, please use the format “Wood Duck 6.” Many thanks to those who are currently using this notation protocol (standard format gives us several more days to join you in birding in beautiful Nova Scotia). However, your reports will be gratefully received regardless of the format.

Many of us are concerned about the empirical data that suggest reduced populations of various species. Thanks to Dave Shutler, who directed us to <[www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/](http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/)> for population data collected during the North American Migratory Counts from 1966 to 2000 and National Audubon Society data from 1959 to 1988. The data have been analyzed for each province and state in North America. You will learn that BNS members have done an outstanding job of letting us know where the birds were from September 21 to December 31, 2002.

Sep 21, Jim Wolford observed European Starlings capturing high-flying ants over Wolfville. Meanwhile, Brenda and Bill Thexton with Jean Timpa saw at least three Peregrine Falcons chasing shorebirds at the Guzzle, northeast of Grand Pre.

Mid-morning, Sep 25, Judy Tufts saw a Pileated Woodpecker overfly Hwy 101 southeast of Windsor; this reminded us that recently a road-killed Pileated was found south of Kingston and taken to the NS Museum. At 4:45 p.m., near high tide, Judy was on the grassy banks separating the Windsor sewage ponds, where she saw more than 100 Black-bellied Plovers, 70–80 yellowlegs (sp – more Lesser than Greater), and a Short-billed Dowitcher.

The same day, Richard Stern was at East Point, Grand Pre, just after high tide, where he saw 50+ Dunlins and 100+ Sanderlings. He also watched a Merlin catch one of a few White-rumped Sandpipers in midair.

Sep 26, at the Middle Dyke Rd pond in Chipmans Corner, Judy Tufts discovered what appeared to be a family of six Canada Geese; there were also two immature Double-crested Cormorants. Further along the road, at the Ducks Unlimited pond, were a male Belted Kingfisher, two Great Blue Herons, 14 Hooded Mergansers, two Greater and two Lesser Yellowlegs, and six more immature Double-crested Cormorants (another was in the Saxon St pond). In Canard Pond were some 50 teal (about 40 Blue-winged).

Jim Wolford postulated that edible materials such as *Daphnia* (water fleas) on the surface of the New Minas sewage ponds were providing food for more than 200 Green-winged Teal and 100+ Mallards. This easy access meant that the usual “tipping up” was unnecessary. Also present were one each of immature female American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, and Ring-necked Duck.

At the New Minas Ducks Unlimited pond, Jim saw six Double-crested Cormorants (1 ad, 5 juv/imm), one juvenile Great Blue Heron, and probably four Lesser Yellowlegs. By 6 p.m., one hour after high tide northeast of the Guzzle at Grand Pre, there were 60 Sanderlings, 20 Dunlins, 20 Semipalmated Plovers, ten White-rumped Sandpipers, and 20 each of Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers.

During September, Sheila Hulford reported populations, some behaviour, and gender of 22 different species that were at or near her Tremont feeders. Some unusual feeder sightings were Yellow-shafted Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Ruffed Grouse.

Oct 2, Jim Wolford reported for the New Minas Ducks Unlimited pond at least 11 brown-plumaged Hooded Mergansers, an immature Double-crested Cormorant, and one yellowlegs (sp).

Oct 2, Judy Tufts was at Silver Lake, Lakeville, to report, “White-fronted Goose was with 98 Canada Geese, and eight Hooded Mergansers (including one male in breeding plumage). At Canard Pond, five Ring-

necked Ducks, Mallards (14m, 6f), American Wigeons (1m, 3f), about 60 teal (half and half Blue-wings and Green-wings), a few Black Ducks, and then a flock of 28 Canada Geese flew in and settled in among the many gulls bathing there. At Saxon St pond were a Pied-billed Grebe, a Double-crested Cormorant, and two Blue-wing Teal on the main pond. A female Wood Duck and a female Blue-winged Teal were in the smaller marshy pond across the road, along with a few Mallards and Black Ducks. At Harris Pond in Canning were one Great Egret, two Pied-billed Grebes, 16 American Wigeon, 119 Canada Geese, four Ring-necked Ducks, three Green-winged Teal, some Mallards and Blacks, and one Belted Kingfisher.”

Mike McCall reported Oct 7: “The small pond on Saxon Rd gave me three Pied-billed Grebes and one Red-winged Blackbird. At Harris Pond in Canning, 16 Canada Geese, two Lesser Scaup, a mixed lot of about a dozen Eurasian and American Wigeons, and four Pied-billed Grebes.”



COURTESY OF G.

Judy Tufts recommends checking the Windsor sewage ponds at high tide; for example, on Oct 11 there were 400–500 shorebirds gathered on the grassy banks between ponds. Without a spotting scope, Judy was able to identify more than 50 Sanderlings and at least 100 Black-bellied Plovers. She heard several yellowlegs, and there were 200–300 peeps and other smaller shorebirds

Mike McCall reported on October 20, “Silver Lake: 155 Canada Geese, one Spotted Sandpiper, and a not-too-rare bird, Bernard Forsythe. On Middle Dyke Rd about 0.5 km south of Blueberry Acres: at least 15 Bald Eagles on the ground near a slough (5–6 adults, the rest immature). Four of the immatures were very, very dark and markedly smaller than the adults.”

That same day, Gordon and Judy Tufts were at the Windsor sewage ponds, where they saw “about 500 Canada Geese, two Wilson’s Phalaropes (too far distant to get accurate plumage but possibly moulting juveniles), 120+ Black-bellied Plovers, 20 Yellowlegs (sp), 120+ Dunlins, 50+ Sanderlings, peeps, teal, Black Ducks and Mallards, and many gulls (mostly Ring-bills). Judy observed, “When the shorebirds decided to head out to the causeway mudflats I drove around to view them feeding on the now exposed western edge of the mudflats near the dam control gates. Very shortly a second smaller mixed flock (200 birds) joined them: Black-bellied Plovers, many more Sanderlings, Dunlins, and some peeps.”

“At Avonport Beach there were adult Double-crested Cormorants, two Back-bellied Plovers, and a raft of about 120 Black Ducks and ten Mallards sheltering from the strong winds. A small farm pond on Ridge Rd, near Hwy 101 exit 10 (Hortonville), held three Greater and three Lesser Yellowlegs.”

Oct 22, Judy confirmed Bill Naylor and family’s Snow Goose sighting at the Windsor sewage ponds.

Oct 24, along the Fundy Shore Richard Stern saw a Red-throated Loon in winter plumage with a trace of a red throat, Northern Gannets off Parker’s Cove, a male Harlequin Duck just east of Parker’s Cove, 200–300 Surf Scoters at Hampton and others farther along, 20+ White-winged Scoters, and 200+ American Robins heading out over the bay.

Angus MacLean and Richard Stern surveyed eastern Kings County on Oct 26; their sightings included two Red-winged Blackbirds, about 75 American Pipits, a Northern Mockingbird, four female Northern Shovellers, three Northern Pintails, one pair of American Wigeons, and many Green-winged Teal. At Grand Pre, Western Dyke, they saw a small flock of Horned Larks, then sighted “a hawk . . . clearly an accipiter, with typical wing shape and flight style of that group. But it appeared large and had a rather direct flight – typical flap/glide of an accipiter. The tail was notably long, and the head stuck out well in front of the wings, which were rather straight, giving the impression of a flying cross. There was no bulkiness, as would be expected with a Goshawk, and the head/body/tail appeared quite slim. The bird was silhouetted all the time we watched it, but we both felt it was probably a Cooper’s Hawk.”

Bill and Brenda Thexton were given a Yellow-billed Cuckoo that likely had been killed by a cat; they turned it over to Acadia University.

Nov 1, at lunchtime near Canard Pond Richard Stern identified a single adult Lesser Black-backed Gull from among the thousands of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls; there were also two female Buffleheads.

Nov 8, Jim Wolford had “25+ American Robins flying around at home in Wolfville.” Al Mutch saw about 40 Snow Buntings feeding in a field that had been planted in Winter Wheat.

The morning of Nov 10, Jean Timpa caught a brief glimpse of what might have been a Northern Shrike. Later in the day, “on my way home from a walk I looked over in a swaley field full of brown dying flowers and alders and noticed, at a distance, a pale yellowy-white sac like a large cocoon swinging slightly in the breeze. Through the binocs I could then make out the dark, well-forked small tail and put the rest of it together as an American Goldfinch, impaled. I made my way over to the unpleasant sight that we should accept as part of nature. Then my next conundrum was to ‘harvest’ it carefully without knife or clippers upon me, but I was pleasantly surprised to be able to tear the small branch off the main branch of the alder and bring it back to Fred Scott this morning for the museum. I know, I know, I stole the poor shrike’s supper (it had eaten part of the brain!), after it had gone to the trouble of snipping off a twig and impaling the bird through its neck onto the spike that it had fashioned.”

Dianne Thorpe had at least 12 Dark-eyed Juncos at her backyard feeders during the first two weeks of November; more than 200 American Robins visited her property Nov 10.

Nov 11, Richard Stern reported one light-phase Rough-legged Hawk, one adult Lesser Black-backed gull, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and more than 100 American Robins all in Grand Pre; a Winter Wren in thick tangle in Greenwich; and abundant White-throated Sparrows. He wrote, “the usual Red-tailed hawks and Bald Eagles, that we tend to take for granted around here but shouldn’t. As usual for the last few days, I was awakened by the loud chattering of one of our resident Northern Mockingbirds perched on the neighbour’s hawthorn tree. Very warm, humid, and windy. Lots of hunters out and banging away at pheasants.”

Throughout November, Brenda and Bill Thexton reported six Harlequin Ducks (4m, 2f), five Common Eiders, one Common Loon, and one American Kestrel in the Margaretsville/Port George area; 50 Snow Buntings north of Kingston; one Snow Goose with about 300 Canada Geese in a field along College Rd in Windsor; one Greater White-fronted Goose with about 300 Canada Geese, five Common Mergansers, and two Buffleheads in Lakeville (Nov 12).

Nov 14, at Port George and Cottage Cove John Belbin reported two Red-necked Grebes, six Horned Grebes, seven Common Eider, four Harlequin Ducks, four Common Goldeneye, five sandpipers (sp), and eight Surf Scoters. In Margaretsville he was greeted by an immature Bald Eagle doing a very low level and menacing shore patrol, five Horned Grebes, a Double-crested Cormorant, three Common Loons, and a Common Raven.

Judy Tufts reported, “Helen Teed and her husband saw a large white egret in the Allains Creek area of Annapolis Royal yesterday, Nov 14, as they were driving past. They believe it was a Great Egret. Possibly the same one reported there off and on this summer? Here on the Wolfville Ridge this morning I found a female Evening Grosbeak in trees in our garden – she was calling but she appeared to be the only one around. First grosbeak I have seen around here in months.”

Nov 23, Richard Stern and Pat Giffin traveled the Fundy Shore from Margaretsville to Parkers Cove, stopping at almost every access to the shore to search mainly for scoters. Richard reported, “unfortunately there is no continuous access to the coast, so the total number is probably at least ten times what one can see from the stops we made. There seems to be a buildup of sea ducks in general along the Fundy shore in November and again March/early April. Numbers this morning were: Red-throated Loon 7, Common Loon 17, Red-necked Grebe 17, Horned Grebe 1, N. Gannet 25, Common Eider 100, Harlequin Duck 5 (Pt. George), Long-tailed Duck 41, Black Scoter 1m, Surf Scoter 68, White-winged Scoter 49, Red-breasted Merganser 8, Razorbill 8. We also saw Sharp-shin, Cedar Waxwings, etc.”

Nov 23, Judy Tufts was at Silver Lake at Lakeville to see the Greater White-fronted Goose and about 110 Canada Geese. That day, Jean Timpa

on “my favourite dyke walk” reported, “25–30 Horned Larks in the air, an adult Bald Eagle in a tree, and three crows harassing a large (probably female) brown harrier.

Nov 27, good advice from John Belbin: “Pay attention to flocks of small cheeping birds – they are quite often not chickadees . . . around Paragon Golf there were three flocks of juncos, averaging 30 birds each. Of the four flocks of chickadees (averaging 20 or so birds), one included a Brown Creeper, two flocks had both a Brown Creeper and a White-breasted Nuthatch, and the fourth had only a WB Nuthatch as far as I could see. Another group, which at first I thought was chickadees, turned out to be at least 12 Golden-crowned Kinglets, flitting from branch to branch like large moths, accompanied by at least two Red-breasted Nuthatches and one creeper – no chickadees at all.”

Nov 29, John reported Wood Ducks (2m, 1f) on the Annapolis River at Kingston.

Dec 1, Jim Wolford reported, “a single adult Chipping Sparrow (still pretty much in breeding/alternate plumage with a bright rufous cap). On the ground under the feeders with White-throated Sparrows and juncos was an immature White-crowned Sparrow.”

Richard Stern reported a dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk over the fields near Grand Pre. Harold Forsyth reported a Yellow-breasted Chat and a Wilson’s Warbler with black cap at his place in Greenwich.

Dec 7, Angus MacLean watched about 25 Canada Geese winging their way southwest and spotted an immature male Purple Finch, the first he’d had for many months. In Grand Pre he saw four Horned Larks feeding on ploughed ground.

An Eastern Phoebe was sighted at Van Nostrand’s pond by Lana and James Churchill on Dec 7 (per JWW).

Dec 10, Richard Stern sighted a first winter Glaucous Gull among a few thousand other gulls. Later, while examining the photographs, he identified a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Dec 11, Angus MacLean sighted two adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a first year Glaucous Gull among the flocks of other gulls along Fred Thomas Rd. Angus wrote, "there was a male Harrier along Wellington Dyke and a few flocks of Tree Sparrows (some mixed with juncos) in the Starrs Point area. Along the Port Williams dyke, a Red-tailed Hawk was doing an excellent imitation of a Rough-legged Hawk, hovering low for two to three minutes. Then it perched on one of the two posts in the area usually occupied by a Rough-leg"

Dec 14, highlights of the Wolfville count include at least three Peregrine Falcons, Northern Mockingbirds (Merritt Gibson saw five in the Canning area), Northern Cardinals, and one Yellow-breasted Chat (Helen Sharp in Margaretsville had had a chat at her feeders since Nov 13). Sherman Williams reported 65 Bald Eagles in the Avonport area. [See *CBC report* pp. 8–10—ed.]

Thanks to Mary Louise and Murray Conlin for making many birders welcome in their home and on their property in North Berwick. The Carolina Wren was in great condition thanks to the food and environment provided by the Conlins. It was a lifer for Bernard Forsythe and others, including us (Giffins). Jim Wolford reported, "Mary Louise Conlin adds that the Carolina Wren has been present in their yard north of Berwick



for about two months – thus at least from early November."

Dec 19, Jim Wolford found a mockingbird perched in a roadside multiflora rose shrub along Wickwire Ave. Glenys Gibson and Ian Paterson saw a Short-eared Owl just north of the railroad tracks at Greenwich, along the highway to Port Williams.

Dec 27, Al Mutch wrote, "A Sharp-shin came to our yard about a week ago. The birds all hid in the trees until I stepped out and scared it off."

Dec 28, Jim Wolford reported on the West Hants CBC: "My count for the group tally was only 58 species, compared with 66 last year. Selected highlights were a Kestrel, a Spruce Grouse, Purple Sandpipers, a Wilson's Snipe, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, one Great Horned Owl, six or seven Barred Owls, one Northern Saw-whet Owl – owlers Gail Davis and Fulton Lavender in the northern part of the circle did very well indeed."

Dec 31, Sheila Hulford reported 21 species at her feeders, and in Kings and Annapolis Counties highlights were Yellow-breasted Chat at Audrey Wellwood's feeder in North Aylesford, Pileated Woodpecker, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

# **Eastern Annapolis Valley Weather – Autumn 2002**

**by Larry Bogan, Cambridge Station, NS**

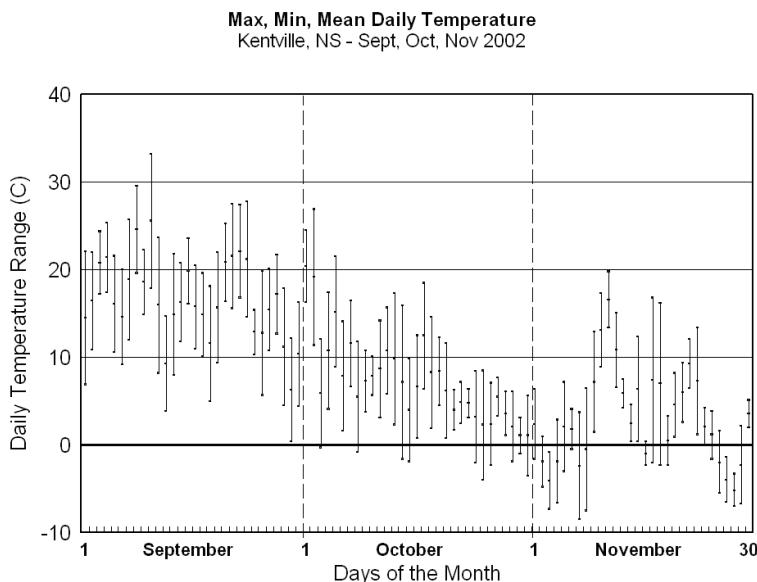
What a wet, cool autumn we had! Throughout the whole season there was not a week when it did not rain or snow at least once.

	<b>Mean temperature (deg.C)</b>	<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>	<b>Snowfall (cm)</b>	<b>Heating degree-days</b>	<b>Bright sunshine (h)</b>
<b>September</b> (40 yr. average)	16.6 (14.6)	175 (93)	0 (0)	80 (117)	190 (165)
<b>October</b> (40 yr. average)	7.4 (9.2)	87 (107)	0 (0)	333 (275)	154 (140)
<b>November</b> (40 yr. average)	3.1 (3.9)	211 (116)	46 (12)	447 (424)	72 (81)
<b>Season</b> (40 yr. average)	9.0 (9.2)	473 (316)	46 (12)	860 (816)	416 (386)

*Source: Food & Horticultural Research Centre, Kentville, NS.*

In my last two weather reports, you may remember, we had near normal precipitation in the spring (260 mm) and below normal rain during the summer (163 mm). The precipitation we received in September, October, and November (473 mm) adds up to more than the total for those two seasons (423 mm). Although September was wet, November was wetter, with the result that we had 50 percent more rain than usual this autumn. During the season we had four days with more than 50 mm of precipitation, and two of those deposited 75 mm or more rain. In the period November 10–13, it rained every day and we received a month's worth of rain (nearly 100 mm). Within the next week, we received another 60 mm. The other major “wet” period was the snow of November 6 that coated the Valley with 33 cm of the white stuff. A few more centimetres at the beginning and end of the month contributed to an amount that was triple the snowfall expected for November.

While November had abnormal precipitation, October and September had more extreme temperatures. September was 2°C warmer than normal and October was 1.8°C colder than normal. November was only 0.8°C below normal in mean monthly temperature. I have included a chart of the daily temperature for the period: you can see that the whole of September stayed around 15–20°C, but as soon as October started, the temperature dropped continuously during that month. As a result, it was cold enough to snow by the first of November. This latter month, however, recovered and jumped up and down in temperature all month. It was up during rains and down during snows. The season as a whole was colder than average by only 0.2°C.



I have a solar-heated home, and autumn is the season in which it works best. Usually, the wood stove (my backup heating) is not needed until late October. This year we used the wood stove more than usual. The reason is that the heating degree-days for October and November were up 11 percent from normal, and the bright sunshine hours were down by 11 percent in November, which is usually a cloudy month anyway. (Heating degree-days provide a means of estimating energy consumption requirements for space heating. Heating degree-days (in Canada) for a given month at a given location are simply the accumulation of the

difference between 18°C and the mean daily temperature for every day of the month when the mean temperature is below 18°C.)

When I compare current weather with climate norms, I use the 40-year averages of temperature, precipitation, and sunshine. In this era of global warming, it is of interest to look at the weather we have had more recently.

### Temperature, Precipitation, Sunshine (1997–2001)

	Mean monthly temperature (deg.C)	Total monthly precipitation (mm)	Total monthly bright sunshine (h)
September	15.9	109	185
October	8.9	134	161
November	3.9	72	68
Season	9.6	315	414

It appears that recently the early part of the season is getting warmer, wetter, and sunnier at the expense of the latter part of the season. Overall, the season in the last five years is slightly warmer by 0.3°C with about the same precipitation and less cloudiness. Only November has fewer bright sunshine hours.



# **What's In The Sky?**

## **by Roy Bishop**

New Moon: January 2, February 1, March 2, April 1

Full Moon: January 18, February 16, March 18, April 16

Spring begins on Thursday, March 20, at 21:00 (AST)

### **A Note to Jim**

Jim Wolford is a superb proofreader. He will note that the BNS Calendar places the New Moon in March on the third, whereas a few lines above, that event is given as occurring on March 2. The first date is correct for UT (Universal Time, as in England); the second is correct for AST (Atlantic Standard Time, as in Wolfville). Jim would insist that the calendar is for Kings County, so the March New Moon should be on the second. I agree; March 3 was my error.

### **Where Were the Meteors?**

In the last issue of this newsletter, the Leonid meteor shower of last November 18/19 was cited as “your last opportunity for a long time to see what will possibly be a strong meteor shower.” The sky began to clear near midnight that evening and was mostly clear for the main peak of the shower, which occurred toward dawn. Sherman Williams and I saw meteors at a rate of about 120 per hour near 6 a.m. This was impressive, especially in view of the light pollution from the full Moon, which hid the fainter meteors. It was indeed a “strong” shower, although it fell far short of being a “meteor storm.” The cold wind and the early-morning hour meant that most people stayed in bed and missed the show.

The Geminid meteor shower of December 13/14 was clouded out. Thick haze moved over Nova Scotia by mid-evening, and heavy rain fell the next day.

The Quadrantid meteor shower on January 3 was hidden behind the leading edge of another storm system. The next day brought a blizzard that shut down the Halifax airport, disrupting the plans of holiday travelers.

The next meteor shower worth watching is the Perseid shower of next August. Unfortunately, the Moon will be full, so the shower will be less impressive than in years when the sky is dark. However, the 2004 Perseids will occur in a dark sky; let us hope that it is also a clear sky!

### **Three Bright Planets**

The planets Saturn and Jupiter continue to dominate the night sky. As evening twilight falls, Saturn is already very high in the southeast, while Jupiter is very bright and unmistakable low in the northeast. Both planets are well placed high in our night sky this winter, permitting good telescopic views of these huge worlds. Saturn was in opposition to the Sun and closest to Earth on December 17. Jupiter reaches that configuration on February 2. Saturn's rings are presently tilted to their maximum extent with their south side facing Earth.

Venus, even brighter than Jupiter, dominates the southeast pre-dawn sky. Early morning commuters heading into Halifax cannot fail to notice this bright planet.

### **A Very Rare Event**

Last Halloween, Venus passed between Earth and the Sun and entered our morning sky (see the previous paragraph). Venus orbits around the Sun faster than we do, and when it laps us the next time (passing again between Earth and the Sun) Venus will pass directly across the face of the Sun, an event called a "transit." This will occur June 8, 2004, and for a few hours on that date Venus will appear as a small circular black silhouette against the brilliant disk of the Sun.

Usually when Venus laps Earth (like last Halloween) it passes either north or south of the Sun and no transit occurs. This is because the orbit of Venus is tilted  $3.4^\circ$  relative to Earth's orbit. Only when Venus laps Earth when near one of its two "nodes," the intersection points of its orbit with the orbital plane of Earth, does it line up with the Sun. The last pass of Venus across the Sun occurred in 1882; thus no one living today has seen a transit of Venus. Transits occur in pairs, eight years apart. Venus transits the Sun in 2004 and again in 2012, after which more than a century will pass until the next pair in 2117 and 2125. Portions of both the 2004 and 2012 transits are visible from Nova Scotia. Let us hope the sky is clear for at least one of them.

## **Big Moon, Big Tides, and the 2003 BNS Calendar**

The four successive full Moons in January, February, March, and April (see the dates at the beginning of this article) are progressively closer to Earth and hence appear larger and larger in our sky. Indeed, the Full Moon of April 16 is the largest of 2003. On that date the Moon's closest point to Earth (perigee) in its elliptical orbit occurs within a few hours of its full phase.

An additional consequence of big Full Moons particularly relevant to Minas Basin is that the tide range is extreme on April 17–19. Similar conditions (though not quite as extreme) occur around March 19–21 and May 16–18. Remember that extreme high tides also mean extreme low tides, exposing regions of the seabed that are seldom seen. As I've said before, we are so fortunate in having ringside seats for the largest tides on planet Earth. Minas Basin is a magical place.

One of the most sublime sights is that of the Full Moon rising over the eastern horizon during evening twilight. To assist people in catching this event, an innovation in the BNS calendar for 2003 is the listing of the time of moonrise for Kings County on days near Full Moon. For instance, the calendar tells us that if we wish to see the rise of the largest Full Moon of 2003 (on April 16), we should be looking toward the eastern horizon at 20:04.

You don't have this unique calendar? Buy one at Herbin's, Eos, or the Shur-Gain store in Port Williams, or give Harold Forsyth a call. All proceeds from calendar sales support the Blomidon Naturalists Society.

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**Membership fees are due January 1 of the current year**

**Sources of Local Natural History**  
**(compiled by Blomidon Naturalists Society)**

<b>Information</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Home</b>
Rocks & Fossils	Geology Dept Acadia U.	542-2201	
Fish	NS Dept of Natural Resources	679-6091	
Flora – General	Ruth Newell	585-1355	542-2095
Fungi	Darryl Grund	585-1252	542-9214
	Nancy Nickerson	679-5333	542-9332
Mosses & Ferns	John Pickwell		792-1830
Birds – General	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
	Richard Stern	678-4742	678-1975
	Gordon & Judy Tufts		542-7800
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
	Jean Timpa		542-5678
Hawks & Owls	Bernard Forsythe		542-2427
Mammals	Tom Herman	585-1469	678-0383
Amphibians & Reptiles	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
Seashore & Marine Life	Sherman Bleakney		542-3604
	Jim Wolford	585-1684	542-9204
	Michael Brylinsky	585-1509	582-7954
Indian Prehistory & Archeology	Ellis Gertridge		542-2816
	James Legge		542-3530
Astronomy	Roy Bishop		542-3992
	Sherman Williams	542-3598	542-5104
	Larry Bogan		678-0446

